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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 000852

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DEPT FOR H, SCA, INL, PM, AND AID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2017
TAGS: [OREP](#) [MASS](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: STAFFDEL GROVE'S FEBRUARY 19-21 VISIT TO
AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 18976

Classified By: DCM Richard B. Norland; reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C/REL ISAF) Summary: Mr. Hakan Abaci, Civilian Director of the Turkish-led PRT in Wardak province, emphasized that the PRT is mainly a "civilian" operation, which seeks to minimize the visibility of the Turkish military element that provides security for the PRT compound. He said he believes that the key to increasing local people's confidence in the GoA is to provide high quality government infrastructure -- "respectable houses of government" -- and well-trained, well-equipped security forces. Wardak Governor Abdul Jabbar Naeemi said that his first priority is improving education in the province. He said he receives little support from GoA ministries in Kabul, but acknowledged that there are limits to the GoA's capacity to help the provinces. In Kabul, StaffDel member Michele Gordon visited two USAID-funded projects, meeting with "Leahy Initiative" beneficiaries and Afghan civil servants receiving training in public administration. A theme that emerged in a number of StaffDel Grove's meetings was the importance of developing the Rule of Law system in Afghanistan, in order to buttress ongoing efforts to professionalize the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) -- particularly the ANP. Regarding Afghan refugees, Mr. Grove suggested that the USG consider whether additional funding may be necessary to assist the refugees, if the government of Pakistan moves to close the Afghan refugee camps on its territory. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Mr. Paul Grove, Minority Clerk, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SAC-S/FO); and Ms. Michele Gordon, Professional Staff Member for the SAC-S/FO Minority; visited Afghanistan February 19-21 (reftel) to review ongoing USG programs, with emphasis on security assistance and development and reconstruction activities. While in Kabul, they received briefings from senior Embassy staff, ISAF, and CSTC-A. They also met with representatives from the International Republican Institute (IRI), and visited the Afghan Army's Kabul Military Training Center and the Central Training Center for the Afghan National Police (ANP). Outside of Kabul, they visited the Turkish-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Wardak province.

PRT-WARDAK

¶3. (C/REL ISAF) Mr. Hakan Abaci, Civilian Director of the Turkish-led PRT in Wardak province, hosted the StaffDel for

meetings with Wardak Governor Abdul Jabbar Naeemi and local community leaders from the province. Abaci explained that the PRT began operations in November 2006, and that the Turkish government is committed to maintaining PRT operations in Wardak for approximately five years. He emphasized that the PRT is mainly a "civilian" operation, which seeks to minimize the visibility of the Turkish military element that provides security for the PRT compound. When PRT officials travel within the province, he added, a special Turkish police unit in civilian clothes provides security. Abaci acknowledged that the Turkish PRT is able to function this way largely due to the relatively more permissive security environment in the province. That said, he noted that ISAF's threat rating for the province had gone from "Low" to "Medium" in the past year, requiring PRT personnel to exercise appropriate caution in their activities. Abaci also observed that the Turkish PRT enjoys advantages in its relations with the local population, owing to common religion (Islam) and cultural affinities.

¶4. (C/REL ISAF) Asked how the PRT identifies projects for development, Abaci said that Wardak has a five year development plan that was produced in cooperation with UNAMA.

However, that development plan is still a very broad framework. In order to identify specific activities, Abaci explained, the PRT coordinates closely with the provincial and district leaders. Through an iterative process of meetings with locals in the districts, the PRT develops projects with significant local buy-in, thereby helping to draw the population closer to the Afghan government. Abaci underlined that the PRT is not interested in producing numerous small-scale projects, but focuses on efforts that will provide long-term returns. (Note: The PRT facility itself is a high quality complex of buildings specifically designed to be transformed into a college after the Turks

depart Wardak. End Note) He said he believes that the key to increasing local people's confidence in the GoA is to provide high quality government infrastructure -- "respectable houses of government" -- and well-trained, well-equipped security forces. In that context, Abaci explained that the PRT is constructing a training facility where Turkish trainers will provide the 8-week basic police training course to ANP personnel in Wardak. He remarked that he feels a sense of urgency in his work, saying that he believes that the international community and GoA have "months, not years" to convince the Afghan population they are on the right track.

MEETING WITH GOVERNOR NAEEMI

¶5. (C/REL ISAF) At a separate meeting arranged by the Turkish PRT, Wardak Governor Abdul Jabbar Naeemi said that his first priority is improving education in the province. He lamented that, of the 265 registered schools in the province, 136 have no integral shelter or potable water. Naeemi added that many families in the province are sending their children to madrassas in Afghanistan/Pakistan, and that the GoA usually has little insight into what is happening in those schools. Agriculture, which constitutes 70% of the Wardak economy, is his next highest priority. Naeemi touted his achievements in combating poppy cultivation, claiming that Wardak province had become "poppy free" in 2006. He also said he had made significant in-roads in collecting illegal weapons. Noting that he has been Governor since March 2005, Naeemi said that he had worked hard to establish and maintain a dialogue with all parts of the society in Wardak, including families with relatives in or associated with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. He praised the GoA's Peace and Reconciliation Program ("Programme Tahkim-e Solh": PTS), saying that, until the program was created, many Afghan families were divided.

¶6. (C/REL ISAF) Naeemi said he receives little support from GoA ministries in Kabul, but acknowledged that there are limits to the GoA's capacity to help the provinces. He

reported that the district judge for Meydan Shahr (Provincial capital of Wardak) has no office facilities in the district, and must therefore commute from Kabul, while earning only \$70 per month -- "how do I tell him to be a good judge?" Naeemi said he had raised this problem with Chief Supreme Court Justice Azimi, who was sympathetic, but said he had no funds with which he could assist.

SECURITY ASSISTANCE: KMTC, CTC, ROL

¶ 7. (SBU) At the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), StaffDel Grove received an overview of ongoing Afghan National Army (ANA) training programs. Over the past year, the KMTC has expanded its training volume to approximately 2,000 recruits per month, and has diversified its course offerings to include individual and collective advanced training. A Training Assistance Group comprised of military trainers from the United States and seven partner nations, under the leadership of the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan (CSTC-A), provides support for the KMTC. The goal shared by CSTC-A and the MOD is to develop the KMTC into a self-sustaining Afghan institution.

¶ 8. (SBU) At the Central Training Center (CTC) for ANP, StaffDel Grove received briefings from DynCorp police trainers regarding the 8-week basic and advanced courses provided to ANP recruits and officers. The DynCorp trainers emphasized the importance of promoting ANP training standards across Afghanistan, and the need to develop further the MOI's capacity to support ANP training and professional development.

¶ 9. (SBU) A theme that emerged in a number of StaffDel Grove's meetings was the importance of developing the Rule of Law system in Afghanistan, in order to buttress ongoing efforts to professionalize the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) -- particularly the ANP. Mr. Grove commented that international assistance focused specifically on strengthening the capacities and roles of the Afghan judiciary and prosecutors would provide a much needed framework within which the ANP could perform law enforcement duties. He observed that it is useful to view this dimension of the Rule of Law issue as an essential component of the security assistance effort.

DEVELOPMENT/RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE

¶ 10. (U) Ms. Gordon and a USAID Mission representative visited two USAID-funded projects in Kabul. She received a briefing on the International Organization for Migration's Civilian Assistance Program ("Leahy Initiative") and visited one of the project's field activities where she met a beneficiary who has received vocational training and equipment to begin a new small business. Ms. Gordon also visited a civil service training center where some Afghan civil servants are receiving training in public administration as part of USAID's Afghan Building Capacity Project.

AFGHAN REFUGEES

¶ 11. (SBU) The future of Afghan refugees still living in Pakistan was addressed in the context of meetings with Embassy senior staff. Mr. Grove suggested that the USG start considering whether additional funding may be necessary to be prepared to provide proper assistance to Afghan refugees, if the government of Pakistan moves forward with its stated intention of closing the Afghan refugee camps on its territory.

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